

THE FLAME OF FREEDOM

A CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY FOR 4-H GROUPS

(For the Ceremony a grouping of nine candles is necessary, as well as the candles needed for each person taking part. Much will depend on the Reader who will need to be a person who can speak distinctly and with expression. If it is possible to have a verse speaking choir or group trained to speak the "Chorus" parts together the ceremony will gain in interest and effectiveness. The ceremony is planned to include music also, both instrumental and vocal. However, all of these things could be adapted to the community in which the ceremony is given.)

PROLOGUE

Musical Setting: Chorus sings:

"These things shall be - a loftier race  
Than e'er the world hath known shall rise  
With flame of freedom in their souls  
And light of knowledge in their eyes."

Reader: Through the long centuries man has been searching for that freedom which he has felt to be necessary to a full and satisfying way of life. In that quest there have been many mistakes - many relapses into old ways. But the trend has been upward, led by certain torchbearers who carried "the flame of freedom in their souls."

PART I - BEFORE CHRIST

Musical Setting: "Song of the Volga Boatmen" played softly before the Reader begins.

Reader: Who did the work of the ancient world? The heavy, grinding, cheerless toil?  
Who hauled and heaved stone upon stone to build the pyramids of Egypt?  
Who were the hewers of wood and carriers of water in ancient Babylon?  
Who served as oarsmen on the Roman galleys?  
Who dug the moats and laid the drawbridges of Northern Europe?

Chorus of Voices: Slaves!

And their masters were the strong,  
But not always the just!

Reader: Listen to the voices of slaves - the Captives of Old Babylon.

Chorus of Voices: By the rivers of Babylon

There we sat down, yea, we wept,  
When we remembered Zion.  
Upon the willows in the midst thereof  
We hanged our harps.  
For they that led us captive required of us songs, saying,  
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."  
How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a strange land?



Reader: A few were brave enough to speak out against the unfairness of slavery. Isaiah the Hebrew prophet proclaimed that the first quality of a good ruler is justice. Here he speaks:

Chorus (or Man's Voice): "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light..  
The rod of the oppressor has been broken....  
For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the  
government shall be upon his shoulder .... to uphold it with  
justice and righteousness FOREVER.  
Behold a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall  
rule in justice. And they shall be as the shadow of a great  
rock in a weary land."

Reader (To Light Bearer): Let us light our first candle in honor of those who  
first lighted the flame of freedom for "the people that walked in  
darkness."

## PART II - CHRISTIANITY

Musical Setting: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" played softly to introduce the thought  
of the Reader.

Reader: Through the sunny countryside of Palestine there walked a penniless teacher,  
living on the gifts of friends and gathering about him a band of loyal  
followers.

Jesus of Nazareth taught with clear conviction that God is the Father  
of All, that all men are brothers.

In this kind of society no one had a right to own another.

In his "Kingdom of God" all men were of equal importance and individual  
worth. Also, he taught that real freedom comes from within, through  
loyalty to a kind and loving God. To serve God one must treat all  
people with fairness and kindness. His words ring through the centuries:

Man's Voice: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye  
even so to them."

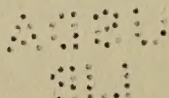
"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with  
all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy might, and  
thy neighbor as thyself."

Reader: Even his close followers did not grasp all of his real meaning. And  
to this day his teachings are too big for our small hearts. But he  
gave us an ideal which the years have shown to be high and true.  
(To Light Bearer) Let our second (or tallest) candle stand for Jesus'  
high ideal of the freedom of the spirit through loyalty to God and  
service to mankind.

## PART III - THE MAGNA CHARTA - RUNNYMEDE, 1215 A.D.

Musical Setting: "March of the Men of Harlech"

Reader: In the days when King John ruled England with a despotic hand, he once  
asked his vassals to march with him across the sea to reconquer some of  
the land which he had lost to the King of France. But their reply was a  
forceful "No". They were not required by their feudal obligations to





fight outside their own country.

Moreover, a group of barons met and wrote a list of things which, according to English tradition, a king might not do. This document, to be known as the Magna Charta, or Great Charta of Liberties, they forced their sovereign to sign. Listen to the barons at Runnymede:

Voice: And this most important of all, O King:

Chorus: "No freeman shall be arrested or imprisoned or deprived of his property unless he be immediately sent before a court of his peers for trial."

Reader: (To Light Bearer) Let us light our third candle in honor of the spirit of liberty which burned in the hearts of the English barons at Runnymede.

#### PART IV - DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, PHILADELPHIA, 1776

Musical Setting: "My Country, T'is of Thee", to be sung as a solo or chorus.

Reader: When on the new continent of America a group of colonists felt they were being denied their rights as subjects of the King of England, their love of liberty resulted in a daring document addressed to their ruler, King George III. Listen to a few phrases from the Declaration of Independence:

Chorus: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.... We therefore .... solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states."

Reader: Let us light our fourth candle, representing the love of freedom which gave our forefathers courage to launch a new nation.

#### PART V - CONSTITUTION - PHILADELPHIA. 1787

Musical Setting: "Land of Hope and Glory" (Pomp and Circumstance, by Elgar) or "Speed Our Republic" (Keller's American Hymn)

Reader: The Declaration of Independence had to be followed by a practical set of rules for a free and independent people to live by. It is significant that the first ten amendments to this Constitution were the same as those embodied in the English Bill of Rights, a document which had guarded the rights of free people for a century. We hear the preamble to the Constitution of the United States:

Chorus: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Reader: (To Light Bearer) Let us light our fifth candle in honor of those who tended the flame of freedom in a new land, having faith in a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."



PART VI - EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION - WASHINGTON, 1862

Musical Setting: "Nobody Knows the Trouble I See" sung as a solo or chorus.

Reader: Free people must often search their hearts to see that the freedom they boast of is in truth the possession of all. When America faced the question of freedom for the colored race she was fortunate to have as her clear-thinking leader Abraham Lincoln, whose devotion to the ideal of freedom and tolerance brought his country through a perilous period. Listen to some of Lincoln's thoughts:

Voice: "No nation can exist half slave and half free."

Reader: And from the Emancipation Proclamation:

Voice: "That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty two, all persons held as slaves within any state or any designated part of a state.....shall be then, henceforward and forever free."

Reader: (To Light Bearer) As we hear the words and music of the National Negro Hymn let us light our sixth candle, symbolizing freedom for the colored race in America.

"Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring  
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.

Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song, full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song, full of the hope that the present has brought us,  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won!"

PART VII - WORLD WAR I - 1917

Musical Setting: "Keep the Home Fires Burning" or "Over There".

Reader: "We must make the world safe for democracy" came the challenge of President Wilson in 1917. And with this slogan young men were sent forth to the first World War. Out of the conflict came thoughts of peace and freedom. Listen to Herman Hagedorn's "Boy in Armor" speaking for those who lost their lives, challenging the living to work for democracy and freedom during peace time:

Chorus: "Weep not for us, but for your own trapped souls.  
We died, and there you stand no step advanced.  
.....  
You still will have to wake some day and think.  
You have more sons than these.....



They will go forth , if you command,  
And die as we have died, since they love liberty and would give her cause  
The only gift they are aware is theirs.  
Beyond the clouds the stars are, and the stars  
Will not forever vainly wait the aeronaut  
Who shall uncover laws to lift men up  
More potent than the laws to drag men down."

Reader: Out of the conflict came also the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of International Justice, an attempt to "uncover laws to lift men up" by making the world a place where freemen might live in security and peace. And because they did not accomplish all they set out to do, "We still must wake and think" - and look for a still better way. (To Light Bearer) Let us light our seventh candle in honor of those who worked to keep the flame of freedom alive by serving their country in many ways in the dark days following 1917.

#### PART VIII - WOMAN SUFFRAGE - 1920

Musical Setting: "Forward Through the Ages"

Reader: Wearing a red shawl, Susan B. Anthony walked proudly on to the public platforms of the late nineteenth century, proclaiming that the right to vote belongs to women as well as to men, and working tirelessly for "The Cause" of equal rights for women. Although it was 15 years after her death that the Susan B. Anthony Amendment to the Constitution gave suffrage to the women of America, it was she, with the co-workers who "changed the mind of a nation", granting equality to women as part of the unfolding process of freedom. Listen to the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution:

Woman's Voice: "The rights of the citizens of the United States shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State because of sex."

Reader: (To Light Bearer) Let us light our eighth candle in honor of those who saw woman's part in "the larger freedom".

#### PART IX - WORLD WAR II - 1941

Musical Setting: "This is Worth Fighting For" or "The White Cliffs of Dover"

Reader: Yet again came a menace to freedom-loving people. Oppression and injustice grew unbearable and men learned again that freedom is neither won nor maintained without effort. Now the conflict rages again to determine if slave drivers or free people shall rule the world. For free people obey not other men, but the laws which they themselves have made. For the laws can be changed if they are found to work injustice. (To Light Bearer) Let us light our ninth candle for the faith and courage which today keep us working and sacrificing for that freedom which the future holds in store for the world.



PART X - THE CHALLENGE TODAY

Musical Setting: "These Things Shall Be - A Loftier Race" sung by the chorus.

Reader: And what is our part in bringing this future freedom to pass?  
Inspired by the torchbearers of the centuries let us light our candles  
from their flame, resolving to add our strength and tallness of purpose  
to that loftier race which is to be, that the flame of freedom may continue  
to burn brightly in the world.  
(When the candles are lighted):  
Long ago Abhenian youth took a pledge of loyalty to their state. Let  
us repeat it together now, making it a pledge of loyalty to our America -  
which we pray may always be a free America!

Everyone: "We will never bring disgrace to this nation by any act of dishonesty or  
cowardice.  
We will respect our nation's laws and obey them, that we may be an example  
to others.  
We will seek to make justice, peace, and brotherhood prevail.  
We will pass on this nation not less, but greater, better, more  
beautiful than it came to us."

Reader: (triumphantly)  
"The glory of the present is to make the future free:  
We love our land for what she is, and what she is to be."

Closing Song: (everyone) "America the Beautiful"

(If slides illustrating the phrases of this song could be shown it would  
add much to its effectiveness as a climax for the ceremony).